



# Child Abuse and Neglect: What You Should Know

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## What are the types of child abuse and neglect?



Definitions of abuse include **physical abuse**, **sexual abuse** and **neglect** (known also as **emotional abuse**.)

### Harm to children can result from:


- Physical injury, such as beatings, burns and bites.
- Constant criticism, insults, the withholding of love.
- Rape, fondling of the genitals, incest.
- The failure to provide food, clothing, shelter, or medical care.

## Who abuses children – and where?

Most child abuse occurs in the family home. Parents, siblings and visitors can all inflict abuse.

## How can you tell if a child is being abused?

### Children who are physically abused may:

- Be nervous around adults.
  - Be watchful, as though preparing for something bad to happen.
  - Have difficulty playing.
  - Act aggressive to adults and other children.
  - Be unable to concentrate at school.
  - Suddenly underachieve – or overachieve – at school.
  - Find it difficult to trust other people and make friends.
  - Arrive at school too early, or leave after the other children.
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### Children who are sexually abused may:

- Behave differently when the abuse starts.
- Care less about their appearance, or their health.
- Talk or act sexually at too early an age.
- Be secretive and stop talking about home-life.
- Start soiling themselves.
- Be unable to sleep.
- Suddenly find physical contact frightening.
- Run away from home.

—Over



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**Children who are neglected or emotionally abused may:**

- Have difficulty learning to talk.
- Find it hard to develop close relationships.
- Be over-friendly with strangers.
- Be unable to play imaginatively.
- Think badly of themselves.
- Underachieve at school.



**Remember:** none of these signs prove that child abuse is present, since any of them may be noticeable at one time or another. But when they occur repeatedly or in combination with one another, the child may be suffering abuse.



**What can you do to help?**

If you suspect a child is being abused, the child must be protected from further abuse. Call your local Child Protective Service Agency. You'll find the number in the front of your phone book.

**To help prevent child abuse, you can:**

- Be a nurturing parent!
- Help a friend, neighbor or relative if they are having difficulty with their child(ren).
- Get involved – advocate for services to help families.
- Volunteer at a local child abuse program.
- Help to develop parenting resources at your local library.

